



The Radio & Television News Association of Southern California (RTNA) met recently with the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to discuss media access and protocols in the event of civil unrest. Based on that conversation, and to help ensure safety, the RTNA has the following suggestions when covering rallies, protests, marches, or any unexpected civil unrest. These are only suggestions. Please check with your outlet for specific guidance.

1. Have phone numbers and contact information for the law enforcement agency's PIO, Watch Commander and Dispatch with you and your crew. Provide these numbers to your assignment desk, producers, and legal team in the event you are detained or cannot be contacted in the field.
2. Call ahead for the law enforcement agency's preferred placement and parking for the media.
3. If provided/available, have appropriate safety gear: Goggles, gas mask, helmet, body armor, etc. Check with the law enforcement agency for permitted gear.
4. After you have parked in a safe and secure area, determine an exit strategy for you and your crew – both by foot and in a vehicle. Create a buddy system or contingency if you get separated from your team.
5. After you arrive, seek out the nearest law enforcement representative and ask to speak with a supervisor, PIO or Incident Commander: Introduce yourself, your crew and security detail – show your credentials, station ID

or business card. Confirm where they would like you to stage and where you should go in the event an order to disperse has been issued.

6. **PROMINENTLY** display your law enforcement agency-issued press credential, station identification or any station-issued clothing with call letters or station logo, including mic flags. The federally mandated yellow vest for use on freeways is also good to wear, especially if it has a station logo or call letters. **Freelancers: Make sure you are issued a letter or identifier from the contracting outlet to verify your assignment. Or, have a business card identifying your position – also, refer to suggestion #5.**
7. If your coverage puts you in the middle of a crowd, make sure you continue to prominently display your media affiliation and take all precautions to remain safe. Law enforcement has made it clear in times of chaos, officers and deputies find it difficult to separate protesters from the media, especially if the media are not wearing credentials or other prominently displayed affiliation. If you choose to blend in as a protester you may be mistakenly treated with any appropriate tactical response.
8. Members of the media must comply with lawful orders and commands – this includes an order to disperse or unlawful assembly. CA Penal Code 409.5 does not apply to these orders.
9. If you are detained, calmly identify yourself as a member of the media, show your credentials or business card and ask for a supervisor or PIO. It's even better if you know a name - this is why introducing yourself ahead of time is a good idea. If you are told to hand over your camera, recording deck or any work product, explain

it is the property of your company and they must contact them directly.
Have someone nearby record the interaction and make sure you have them
send it to your assignment desk or other colleagues.